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The Great Seal of the United States

United States Department of State

The Great Seal of the United States

Before it adjourned on July 4, 1776, the Continental Congress of the newly independent United States passed a resolution:

Resolved, that Dr. Franklin, Mr. J. Adams and Mr. Jefferson, be a committee, to bring in a device for a seal for the United States of America.

Thus, three of the five men who had drafted the Declaration of Independence were brought together in further service to their country. The revolutionaries needed an emblem and national coat of arms to give visible evidence of c sovereign nation and a free people with high aspirations and grand hopes for the future. The task proved far more difficult than anticipated; it took 6 years, two more committees, and the combined efforts of 14 men before the Great Seal of the United States became a reality on June 20, 1782.

READEX FICHE

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Washington, D.C. 20402

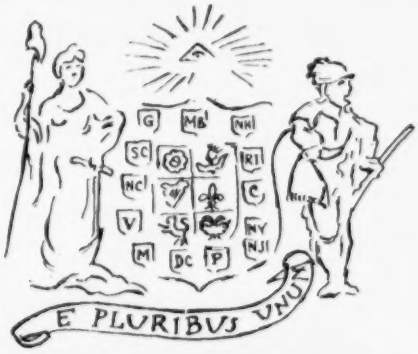
Designing a Seal

The First Committee

The challenge facing the committee was to translate intangible principles and ideals into graphic symbols. Three of the best minds of the Age of Enlightenment —Franklin, Adams, and Jefferson— struggled unsuccessfully with Biblical and classical themes, including the Children of Israel in the Wilderness and the Judgment of Hercules. Finally they sought the help of a talented "drawer" and portrait artist, Pierre Eugene du Simitiere. To the post of consultant, Du Simitiere brought some knowledge of heraldry—the art of describing coats of arms—and also experience in designing seals.

Four features recommended by the first committee and its consultant were later adopted in the final seal: the Eye of Providence and the date of independence (MDCCLXXVI), both of which appeared on the final reverse side of the seal, and the shield and Latin motto, *E Pluribus Unum* (Out of many, one), on the obverse side.

The first committee submitted its design on August 20, 1776, but the Congress ordered the report "to lie on the table," indicating lack of approval.



Portrait artist Du Simitiere's design for Franklin, Adams, and Jefferson suggested shield, Eye of Providence in radiant triangle, and motto, *E Pluribus Unum*, all used in final design. Drawn from original in Thomas Jefferson papers.

The Second Committee

In March 1780 the Congress turned the design and final report of the first committee over to a new committee, composed of James Lovell, John Morin Scott, and William Churchill Houston. They asked Francis Hopkinson, the gifted Philadelphian who had designed the American flag and the great seal of the State of New Jersey, to serve as their consultant. They too failed to create an acceptable seal, but, influenced by the flag adopted in 1777, they contributed to the final design 13 red and white stripes, the constellation of 13 six-pointed stars, and the olive branch, a symbol of peace.

Second committee's consultant, Francis Hopkinson, contributed red, white, and blue colors to shield, an arrow and olive branch, and radiant constellation of 13 stars.

Great Seal Origins

Great seals have their origins in the royal seals of the 7th, 8th, and 9th centuries, but the first seal to be called "great" was that of England's King John (1199–1216). The King's Chamber acquired a smaller seal of its own, called the "privy seal," for use in the sovereign's private business, and thereafter the King's seal became known as the "Great Seal." Our seal is called "Great Seal" although no "lesser" seal exists.

The Third Committee

In May 1782 the Congress appointed a third committee. The three members, John Rutledge, Arthur Middleton, and Elias Boudinot, did little or no serious work themselves, relying on the services of William Barton of Philadelphia. A young lawyer with artistic skill and well versed in heraldry, he became a central figure in the seal's refinement.

Barton's chief contribution at this stage was the eagle, not the American bald eagle, but a small crested white eagle "displayed" (with its wings spread). He combined it with a small flag and a design for the reverse which contained a 13-step unfinished pyramid and the first committee's Eye of Providence. He quickly drew up two designs and their technical explanations and the committee turned in its report 5 days after it was appointed.

Charles Thomson's Proposal

The Congress still was not satisfied. On June 13, 1782, it presented the collected work and recommendations of the three committees to Charles Thomson, Secretary of Congress. Thomson was not an artist, but he was a practical man with the ability to get things done and he was just what was needed at this moment. He selected what he believed to be the best features of all the previous designs, assigning prominence to the eagle. Feeling that the new nation's symbol should be strictly American, however, Thomson replaced Barton's crested Imperial eagle with the native American bald eagle, wings extending downward as though in

Lawyer William Barton's design for third committee combined white eagle, flag, and reverse side with 13-step pyramid and first committee's Eye of Providence.

flight. He placed in the left talon a bundle of arrows and in the right, the olive branch.

Thomson's modified crest (a device placed above the shield) was a constellation of 13 stars surrounded by clouds. The shield, borne on the eagle's breast, was a chevron design with alternating red and white stripes. Adopting the motto *E Pluribus Unum* from the first committee's report, Thomson included it on a scroll clenched in the eagle's beak. His was the first proposal in which the final design of the obverse can be seen.

In his design of the seal's reverse, Thomson retained the pyramid with the Eye of Providence in a triangle at the zenith and, as products of his Latin scholarship, introduced the mottos *Annuit Coeptis* (He [God] has favored our undertakings) over the eye and *Novus Ordo Seclorum* (A new order of the ages) beneath the pyramid. He gave his rough sketches and reports to Barton, depending on him to polish the designs.

Secretary of Congress Charles Thomson united earlier suggestions, gave them fresh and novel arrangement, pleasing in its simplicity and lack of clutter. His design was first to foreshadow one Congress adopted.

Charles Thomson's "Remarks and Explanation" Adopted by the Continental Congress, June 20, 1782

"The Escutcheon is composed of the chief [upper part of shield] & pale [perpendicular band], the two most honorable ordinaries [figures of heraldry]. The Pieces, paly [alternating pales], represent the several states all joined in one solid compact entire, supporting a Chief, which unites the whole & represents Congress. The Motto alludes to this union. The pales in the arms are kept closely united by the chief and the Chief depends on that union & the strength resulting from it for its support, to denote the Confederacy of the United States of America & the preservation of their union through Congress.

"The colours of the pales are those used in the flag of the United States of America; White signifies purity and innocence, Red, hardiness & valour, and Blue, the colour of the Chief signifies vigilance, perseverance & justice. The Olive branch and arrows denote the power of peace & war which is exclusively vested in Congress. The Constellation denotes a new State taking its place and rank among other sovereign powers. The Escutcheon is born on the breast of an American Eagle without any other supporters [figures represented as holding up the shield] to denote that the United States of America ought to rely on their own Virtue.

"Reverse. The pyramid signifies Strength and Duration: The Eye over it & the Motto allude to the many signal interpositions of providence in favour of the American cause. The date underneath is that of the Declaration of Independence and the words under it signify the beginning of the New American Æra, which commences from that date."

Meaning of the Seal

The Final "Device"

Barton portrayed the eagle with its wings displayed, but with wing tips upward, and simplified Thomson's chevron arrangement of stripes on the shield. He arranged 13 vertical stripes, alternately white and red, below a rectangular blue "chief" (upper part of the shield). And he specified that the arrows in the eagle's left talon should number 13.

The designs were returned to Thomson on June 19, 1782. He made a few alterations and overnight produced the "blazon" (written description) with accompanying "Remarks and Explanation" and presented them to the Continental Congress on June 20. The Congress acted the same day to adopt the report, which did not contain a drawing of either design.

Thus, nearly 6 years after establishment of the first committee, Charles Thomson and William Barton "brought in a device." The Great Seal of the United States was unique—simple and uncluttered, yet bold—the composite product of many minds.

Symbolically, the seal reflects the beliefs and values the Founding Fathers attached to the new nation and wished to pass on to their descendants. The report which Thomson submitted to the Congress explained the obverse this way: The red and white stripes of the shield "represent the several states . . . supporting a [blue] Chief which unites the whole and represents Congress." The colors are adopted from the American flag: "White signifies purity and innocence, Red, hardiness & valour, and Blue, the colour of the Chief, signifies vigilance, perseverance & justice." The shield, or escutcheon, is "born on the breast of an American Eagle without any other supporters to denote that the United States of America ought to rely on their own Virtue."

The number 13, denoting the 13 original States, is represented in the bundle of arrows, the stripes of the shield, and the stars of the constellation. The olive branch and the arrows "denote the power of peace & war." The constellation of stars symbolizes a new nation taking its place among other sovereign states. The motto *E Pluribus Unum*, emblazoned across the scroll and clenched in the eagle's beak, expresses the union of the 13 States. Recent scholarship has pointed out the probable source of this motto. *Gentleman's Magazine*, published in London from 1732 to 1922, was widely read by the educated in the American Colonies. Its title page carried that same motto and it is quite possible that it influenced the creators of the seal.

The reverse, sometimes referred to as the spiritual side of the seal, contains the 13-step pyramid with the year 1776 in Roman numerals on the base. At the summit of the pyramid is the Eye of Providence in a triangle surrounded by a Glory (rays of light) and above it appears the motto *Annuit Coeptis*. Along the lower circumference of the design appear the words *Novus Ordo Seclorum*, heralding the beginning of the new American era in 1776.

The Die is Cut

1782

The first die was cut from brass in 1782 by an engraver who has not been positively identified (possibly Robert Scot of Philadelphia). It is thought that Charles Thomson, since he was to have custody of the seal as Secretary of the Continental Congress, took it upon himself to find an engraver and someone to supply a suitable press. If Thomson provided a drawing to the engraver, it has disappeared and no drawing made by the engraver has been found. In any case, the seal and its press came into existence sometime between June and September 1782. They were placed in the State House in Philadelphia and on September 16, Thomson used them for the first time. That first sealed document was a full power authorizing General Washington to negotiate and sign with the British an agreement for the exchange, subsistence, and better treatment of prisoners of war. It was signed by the President of the Continental Congress John Hanson and countersigned by Secretary Thomson. Thomson continued as keeper of the seal until the Congress handed over power to the new government in 1789 and custody of the seal passed to the Secretary of State.

The 1782 seal, now on public display in the National Archives, is rather archaic in appearance. It measures 2 5/16 inches in diameter and carries a relatively crude rendering of a crested eagle,[1] thin-legged and awkward, its head protruding into the constellation of six-pointed stars. The bundle of 13 arrows and the olive branch, bare of fruit, are pressed against the border of modified acanthus leaves.

First Great Seal, possibly engraved by Robert Scot of Philadelphia in 1782. Brass die of seal was in use almost 60 years.

[1]The eagle on the Great Seal has always faced to its own right. The eagle that faced to its own left (toward the arrows) was in the Presidential seal and this was the design President Truman altered in 1945 when he ordered the eagle's head turned toward the olive branch.

The Masi Treaty-Seal Die of 1825

European custom in the late 18th century called for the use of pendant seals on certain state documents, such as treaties. These seals consisted of impressions of the die on red or white wax discs which were then placed in silver or silver gilt boxes called skippets. The seal and skippet were suspended from the document being sealed by heavy ornamental cords that bound the pages together, passed through the seal and its box, and ended in tassels.

The United States did not begin to use pendant seals until 1815 (on the instrument of ratification of the Treaty of Ghent), and then it used the die of the 1782 seal to make the wax impressions. But its small size compared unfavorably with the impressive European pendants and Seraphim Masi of Washington, D.C., was asked to design a special treaty seal. He responded with an elegant and graceful design, quite in contrast to the 1782 seal, and $4\frac{1}{16}$ inches in diameter. He didn't follow the official description of 1782 closely, but produced a realistic, uncrested eagle turned slightly to one side, as though resting on the branch of an olive tree. He clearly defined 13 arrows, made the shield narrower and more pointed and altered its crest, and centered the motto *E Pluribus Unum* over the eagle's head. This beautiful seal was used for treaties until 1871, when the government ceased using pendant seals and retired the die. It is available for viewing in the National Archives.

Masi Treaty-Seal Die of 1825, used for pendant seals impressed in wax and enclosed in gold or silver boxes, then fastened with ornamental cords and tassels to treaties.

The Great Seal of the United States

Obverse Side of the Great Seal

The most prominent feature is the American bald eagle supporting the shield, or escutcheon, which is composed of 13 red and white stripes, representing the original States, and a blue top which unites the shield and represents Congress. The motto, *E Pluribus Unum* (Out of many, one), alludes to this union. The olive branch and 13 arrows denote the power of peace and war, which is exclusively vested in Congress. The constellation of stars denotes a new State taking its place and rank among other sovereign powers.

Reverse Side of the Great Seal

The pyramid signifies strength and duration: The eye over it and the motto, *Annuit Coeptis* (He [God] has favored our undertakings), allude to the many interventions of Providence in favor of the American cause. The date underneath is that of the Declaration of Independence and the words under it, *Novus Ordo Seclorum* (A new order of the ages), signify the beginning of the new American era in 1776.

Obverse Side of the Great Seal

Reverse Side of the Great Seal

United States Department of State Bureau of Public Affairs

1841

By 1841 the original die of 1782 had become worn and a new steel die was cut by John Peter Van Ness Throop of Washington, D.C. This die has been called "the illegal seal" because of its faulty design. Whereas the law called for 13 arrows in the left talon, Throop gave his eagle only 6. It is assumed that he didn't work from the text of the resolution of 1782 but rather from an impression made by the worn, original die, which would have shown a bundle of arrows but perhaps not the precise number. This may also account for the fact that he engraved five-pointed stars,[2] instead of the heraldic six-pointed stars of the original. However, these departures from the official design didn't affect the legality of the documents on which this seal was affixed.

The Throop die is of steel, 2⅜ inches in diameter, about the same size as the original. In fact, it is thought that the same press was used for both. But the differences in style are marked: The border is without acanthus leaves; the whole design has been crowded upward; the eagle is more vigorous and uncrested; two arcs, instead of a straight line, form the top of the shield; and the olive branch bears fruit, i.e., four olives.

In early 1866 a crude counter-die of the die was cut for the first time and put into use. It was a duplicate cut in relief, apparently in bronze. Its purpose was to improve the impression from the die when a document was pressed between them. However, the impressions grew less distinct and the die was retired after some 36 years of use.

Great Seal of 1841, engraved in steel by John Peter Van Ness Throop of Washington, D.C. It departed from 1782 design by showing only six arrows in eagle's claw and by giving stars five, rather than six, points. It also added fruit to olive branch.

[2]This innovation has been carried from die to die through the one now in use.

1877

With the celebration of the Centennial in 1876, Americans were reminded of their heritage and interest was aroused in the origins and forms of the Great Seal. An article appeared in the press about this time revealing that there were "irregularities" in the 1841 die of the seal's obverse and that the reverse, although created by law in 1782 had never been cut.[3] The Department of State seemed unaware of any public criticism and the irregularities in the obverse were not corrected when the Throop die began to wear and a new die was cut during 1877. The engraver was Herman Baumgarten of Washington, D.C., who followed the design of the 1841 die very closely, including the errors. The seal was the same size as its two predecessors, but Baumgarten enlarged the stars and the lettering on the motto. It is considered the poorest of all the Great Seal dies and, ironically, it was the one in use for the Great Seal's own centennial in 1882.

[3]Charles Thomson's written description, as adopted by the Continental Congress, provided for the reverse in case it was decided to impress the back of pendant seals. It was never intended that it be used apart from the obverse. A design was drawn in 1786, another in 1856, but no die was produced and pendant seals carried only the obverse of the seal.

1885

By early 1881 the Department of State was beginning to listen to comments from the public and the press about the errors and omissions and bids were asked for engraving a reverse and a new obverse that would correct them. The firm selected was Tiffany & Co. in New York, and its head designer, James Horton Whitehouse, was asked to submit sketches. Whitehouse was a seal engraver, jewel cutter, and art designer of exceptional skill, taste, and artistic judgment. A great deal of research went into these two designs, going back to the original written description adopted in 1782. The Tiffany die of the obverse differs radically from all earlier dies. It is formal and heraldic, rather than realistic, and it served as the pattern for the die in use today. Its 3-inch diameter makes it larger than its predecessors and the eagle once again carries 13 arrows. The olive branch has 13 leaves and 13 olives on it and for the first time the cloud of the crest is in the form of a complete circle.

But it is the eagle itself that has undergone the greatest change. Gone are the thin-kneed eagles with L-shaped legs, replaced by a muscular and unmistakable American bald eagle. More of the body appears above the shield, and the engraving is so skillfully done that the break between the white feathers of the head and neck and the dark feathers of the body is visible in both the die and the impressions. In another departure, the eagle grasps the olive branch and arrows in large, strong claws from behind, not from the front, as previously drawn.

Although a die for the reverse was ordered from Tiffany & Co. and funds were appropriated, the die was not cut. With the passing of pendant seals in 1871 there was no practical use for it.

1904

After only 17 years of use, the steel Tiffany die of 1885 was no longer producing a sharp impression, probably due to a worn counter-die. Whatever the reason, the Department ordered a new die in 1902 and funds were appropriated. Although there was some debate about changing the design, the instructions that went to the Philadelphia firm of Bailey Banks & Biddle were to "furnish a fac-simile" of the design of the Tiffany die "not later than June 15, 1903."[4] The new die was engraved in hardened steel by Max Zeitler, and impressions from it are so nearly identical that it is hard to tell them from those of the 1877 die. There are differences, however. Impressions from the Zeitler die are sharper and clearer, particularly in the feathering of the eagle and in the 19 clouds of the crest. The eagle's feathers are more pointed and its talons have shorter joints. Zeitler also corrected two heraldic errors which had been called to the Department's attention. But it takes close inspection to see any of these changes.

The Zeitler die of the Great Seal was first used on January 27, 1904, and has been in use ever since, some 22 years longer that any of its predecessors.

Great Seal of 1904 by Bailey Banks & Biddle in Philadelphia. The engraver, Max Zeitler, was instructed to reproduce 1885 die as exactly as possible. The engraving was deeper, however, and impressions are still sharp and clear after 82 years of use.

[4]Actual delivery was delayed until January 1904, although the press is engraved "June 15, 1903." The die has been referred to as the die of 1903 because of this, but the 1904 date is more customary.

Uses of the Seal and the Coat of Arms

Designs of the Reverse

Although drawings of the obverse side of the Great Seal were done immediately upon adoption of the design in 1782, the first reverse was not drawn until 4 years later. A Philadelphia engraver, James Trenchard, working from the written description, produced a full page engraving of the reverse for the October 1786 issue of *Columbian Magazine*. He followed the law closely and produced an elongated, 13-step unfinished pyramid, with the two mottos, the date in Roman numerals, and the Eye of Providence in a blaze of glory.

The second drawing of the reverse was probably done by the artist and historian, Benson J. Lossing, to accompany an article he wrote on the Great Seal for the July 1856 issue of *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*. Lossing gave his rather square pyramid a deep perspective and filled the ground around it with flowers and grass. He also changed Trenchard's right Eye of Providence to a left eye, which it has been ever since. This drawing has influenced all later realizations of the written description of 1782, with the exception of the Great Seal Centennial Medal struck in 1882. The back of this medal, which followed closely Trenchard's design, was the first realization of the reverse to be issued officially by the U.S. Government.

The design for the reverse was made available by the Continental Congress in case it was desired to impress the back surfaces of wax pendant seals. The United States used pendant seals for treaties from 1815 to 1871, but the backs were never impressed. Enthusiasm for cutting a die of the reverse has diminished, and to this day one has not been cut. The current official design of the reverse of the Great Seal follows almost exactly the Lossing drawing, and can be seen on the $1 bill.

The Great Seal is used to seal documents 2,000 to 3,000 times a year. Although custody of the first seal had been assigned to the Secretary of the Continental Congress Charles Thomson in 1782, the new government in 1789 assigned it to the Secretary of State. Mr. Thomson hand-carried the seal and press to President Washington, delivered his resignation with genuine regret, and surrendered the books, papers, and records of the late Congress. Thomas Jefferson thus became the first of a long line of Secretaries of State to have custody of the Great Seal.

The actual sealing is done by an officer from the Department's Presidential Appointments Staff. At present it is impressed on the following types of documents, after they have been signed by the President and countersigned by the Secretary of State:

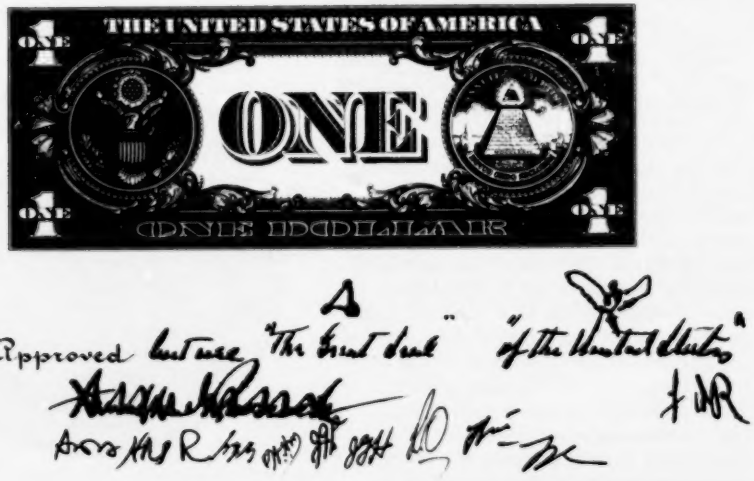
- Instruments of ratification of treaties and other international agreements;
- Proclamations of treaties and other international instruments;
- Appointment commissions of Ambassadors, Foreign Service officers, Cabinet officers, and all other civil officers appointed by the President whose commissions are not required by law to issue under another seal; and
- Assignment commissions for consular officers.

The seal is also affixed to the envelopes that contain letters accrediting and recalling our ambassadors and other ceremonial communications from the President to heads of foreign governments.

The design of the obverse of the Great Seal, which is the coat of arms of the United States, is used by the government in many ways. It has been

shown in some form on coins, postage stamps, stationery, publications, flags, military uniforms, public monuments, public buildings, passports, and other items the U.S. Government has issued, owns, or uses. In full color it is displayed above the doors to all U.S. embassies, consulates general, and consulates throughout the world. It may also appear in black and white, and it may be printed engraved, embossed, shown in relief, etched, carved, stamped, painted, lithographed, stitched, or reproduced by any other process appropriate to the materials being used. One of the more unusual uses of the coat of arms is in a stained glass window of the Prayer Room at the U.S. Capitol.

We see the seal design almost every day, both the obverse and the little-noticed reverse, as it passes through our hands on the $1 bill. In 1935, the Department of the Treasury sent President Roosevelt a new design for the bill, incorporating the obverse and reverse of the Great Seal. After approving it rather routinely, the President changed his mind, scratched out his signature, and inked in several significant changes. He switched the obverse and reverse and added "The Great Seal" under a rough outline of the pyramid and "of the United



Model of back of 1935 dollar bill submitted to President Franklin Roosevelt for approval. The President changed his mind after approving it, reversed placement of obverse and reverse and added legend "The Great Seal of the United States" in two parts under his roughly sketched pyramid and eagle.

States" under an even rougher sketch of the eagle, and initialed the whole "FDR." Upon receipt, Treasury's Bureau of Engraving and Printing duly noted "Received by the Engraving Division June 26, 1935," and revised the model.

All of these uses of the Great Seal die and the design, or coat of arms, are official. Often private, nonofficial requests to use one or the other come to the Department of State. It is the position of the Department that the Great Seal can be affixed only as provided by law and that impressions of the seal cannot be made for display purpose or in response to requests for souvenirs or samples. This position has been applied not only to impressions made from the present die but also to impressions from earlier dies still in existence.

As for the coat of arms, the Department has expressed concern in the past over the increasing tendency to use it in commercial enterprises and in ways that give the impression of U.S. Government sponsorship or involvement. However, it is the current practice not to give opinions as to the suitability of proposed uses, leaving that to the taste of the user. The matter of legality is left to the Department of Justice. Title 18 of the U.S. Code as revised in January 1971 prohibits use of the likeness of the Great Seal or any facsimile in "any advertisement, circular, book, pamphlet, or other publication, play, motion picture, telecast, or other production" for the purpose of conveying a false impression of sponsorship or approval by the U.S. Government under threat of a fine of not more than $250 or imprisonment of not more than 6 months, or both.

"The Eagle and the Shield"

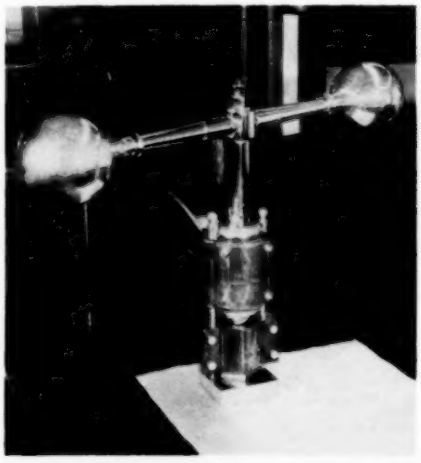
A history of the Great Seal by historians Richard S. Patterson and Richardson Dougall was released by the Department of State in 1978. Replacing the last standard official history done in 1909 by Gaillard Hunt, the 637-page book contains a fascinating study of the seal and its origins, as well as chapters on the seals of the President, Vice President, and the Department of State; answers to frequently asked questions about the seal; and more than 50 pages of illustrations. Copies of *The Eagle and the Shield* are sold by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402 (Tel. 202-783-3238).

Reverse side of Great Seal. Although description was adopted in 1782, no die has ever been cut (see page 12).

Great Seal Today

Sealing of Documents

In the Department of State the term "Great Seal" has come to include not just the die, but the counter-die, the press, and the cover, or cabinet in which it is housed, as well. These stand in the Exhibit Hall of the Department, inside a glass enclosure which is kept locked at all times, even during the sealing of a document. The mahogany cabinet's doors are also kept locked and the press is bolted and padlocked in position except when in use. The seal can be affixed only by an officer of the Department of State, under the authority of its custodian, the Secretary of State. When there are documents ready for sealing, one of the officers carries them to the enclosure where the Great Seal is kept and prepares them for impressing. First, a 3¾-inch, scalloped, blank paper wafer of off-white linen stock is glued in the space provided for it to the left of the document's dating clause. If ribbons are used in binding the document, they are run under the paper wafer and glued fast. Second, the document is inserted between the counter-die and the die, with the wafer carefully lined up between them. Third, the document is held in place with the



Great Seal of 1904 and its press in mahogany cabinet are located in Exhibit Hall of Department of State. Seal is engraved on steel die, cost $600 with press, cabinet, and two copper counter-dies.

left hand and the weighted arm of the press is pulled sharply forward with the right hand, from right to left. This drives the die down onto the wafer, document, and counter-die, which impresses the seal in relief. The die is then raised, releasing the document and allowing for its removal. When an envelope containing letters of credence or recall is to be sealed, the wafer is impressed first, and then glued to the sealed envelope, leaving the envelope itself unmarked.

The Great Seal on Display

The Great Seal is no longer portable as it was in Charles Thomson's day. Although the five Great Seals have had many homes and have been in the custody of 58 Secretaries of State since Thomas Jefferson first took the responsibility, only the 1904 seal seems to have found more or less permanent quarters.

In 1955, it was put on public display for the first time during a ceremony in the Department of State lobby opening an exhibit on the history of the Great Seal, after which it was returned to the mezzanine where the public could view it.

On September 16, 1957, the 175th anniversary of the earliest known use of the seal, another public ceremony took place and four documents were sealed by the then Acting Secretary of State, before television and movie cameras.

It was not until March 1961 that the Great Seal was placed in what everyone considered its first appropriate location—the Exhibit Hall of the Department. This hall is on the first floor, centered between the north and south open-air courts which lie straight ahead of the diplomatic entrance at 2201 C Street, Northwest. There the Great Seal, the press, and the cabinet are on display today.

On June 15, 1982, Secretary of State Alexander Meigs Haig, Jr., hosted a ceremony commemorating the 200th Anniversary of the Great Seal of the United States—June 20, 1982. This was also the inaugural for the new enclosure and exhibit in the Hall for the Great Seal.

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